

creative approach to educating young people about the deadly effects of gun violence and I hope that coaches across the country will consider this program for their school communities.

I urge my colleagues to encourage coaches in their home States to join the Coaches Against Gun Violence, and I commend the Alliance for Justice for its efforts.

#### PROTECT HOME HEALTH CARE

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, home health care is an important part of Medicare in which seniors and the disabled can get basic nursing and therapy care in their home. I rise today to urge the Senate Medicare conferees to stand firm against provisions in the House passed prescription drug and Medicare reform bill, H.R. 1, that would make further cuts in the Medicare home health benefit by reducing the home health inflation update and imposing a new copayment on home health beneficiaries.

Home health care is convenient, but much more importantly, patients love it. I have seen this first hand as I have had the privilege of visiting with many of my constituents who rely on this benefit. They love home health care because it is the key to fulfilling what is virtually a universal desire among seniors and those with disabilities—to remain independent and within the comfort of their own homes despite their health problems.

Since the passage of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, BBA, no other group of Medicare patients and providers have endured as many difficulties. This is a big claim, given the many horror stories we've heard about the Balanced Budget Act. But absolutely nobody has suffered like home health patients and home health agencies. True reform means more than just ratcheting down payments to providers and services to patients.

Since 1997 Medicare home health spending has been reduced by over 40 percent and the number of beneficiaries by 1.3 million, or about a third. Forty percent of the agencies in my State have closed down or quit serving Medicare patients.

In a move to modernize the Medicare program, Congress eliminated the home health copay in 1972 to encourage the provision of health care in the home rather than in more costly institutions. With all the cuts in home health care that have occurred since 1997—including the loss of venipuncture, blood drawing, as a qualifying service, the imposition of per beneficiary limits under the interim payment system, cuts in the market basket inflation update, a "15 percent" cut in October of last year, and the loss of the 10 percent rural add on in April of this year—MedPAC has recently confirmed an alarming trend toward greater use of nursing home care. The reimposition of a home health copayment now would be a step backward that would exacerbate this recent trend.

Home health beneficiaries already must pay the Part B deductible and a 20 percent copay for preparation of a home health plan of care and ongoing home health care oversight by a physician. Over half of home health patients come directly from the hospital and must pay the Part A deductible of over \$800 in order to receive the home health benefit. Often they and their families must pay out of pocket for personal care services to assist with activities of daily living.

Our Nation's dedicated home health providers—and you know they are dedicated if they have stuck with it through the difficulties of the last few years—deserve to be left alone and given a rest. They, and the patients they serve, deserve to be left alone to recover from the post-BBA chaos. They deserve to be left alone in order to adjust to a new home health payment system.

In passing the Senate prescription drug and Medicare reform legislation, S. 1, the Senate wisely chose to forgo further cuts in the home health benefit. I urge my colleagues on the Medicare conference committee to oppose the provisions in H.R. 1 that would further cut and destabilize the home health benefit.

#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in San Diego, CA. On September 24, 2002, two teenagers attacked an immigrant, Jose Luis Cisneros, that left him in a coma for several days and with head and facial injuries. The pair were charged with hate crimes. According to the Deputy District Attorney, they went looking for "beaners" to beat and rob and went to a spot where they knew they could find undocumented immigrants.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE 160TH ANNIVERSARY OF B'NAI B'RITH

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I would like to call my colleagues' attention to a very significant milestone for our nation's oldest and one of the largest service organizations, B'nai B'rith, which was founded on New York City's lower east side in October 1843. Its

name, meaning "Children of the Covenant," reflects a commitment to unify Jewish people everywhere in service to their community and the world. On September 7th, in my home state of Michigan, the Great Lakes Region of this great organization will celebrate the B'nai B'rith anniversary and mark its many achievements in helping others, advocating freedom and democracy, and combating racism and bigotry.

Over the years, B'nai B'rith has been steadfast in meeting challenges on many fronts. Motivated in part by core Jewish values such as loving-kindness to others and peace and justice in the world, it has acted on a fundamental belief that all people should be treated with dignity and respect. Its members have answered the call to stand against racism, persecution, and violence against Jews and others, while working to protect basic human rights and preserve justice. B'nai B'rith has taken a leadership role during pivotal times in our history. Its members have worked to steer our nation on the right path to the benefit of all Americans. They opposed General Ulysses Grant during the Civil War when he attempted to expel Jews from several states. They urged President Theodore Roosevelt to take action in 1903 with the Czar of Russia to denounce anti-Semitic violence. And in 1913 after the lynching of B'nai B'rith member Leo Frank in Atlanta, B'nai B'rith leaders were moved to organize the Anti-Defamation League to battle bigotry.

Now as an international organization, B'nai B'rith is represented in 58 countries around the world. It has a full-time presence at the United Nations and the European Union in Brussels. It has the proud history of having initiated many programs and services, from disaster relief, to feeding the hungry, to medical research, to housing for the low-income elderly, to Jewish education, to a premier Youth Organization and an effective campus outreach for thousands and thousands of Jewish college students. B'nai B'rith helped bring war criminals to justice, has worked tirelessly for Jewish security around the world, and has helped to strengthen the land of Israel. After more than a century and a half of innovation and activism, B'nai B'rith is stronger than ever and continues to make an important and meaningful contribution around the world.

B'nai B'rith can be proud of its dedication to preserve Jewish heritage and promote values that inspire individuals to act in goodwill and to shape their communities for the betterment of all. We as a nation have benefitted from their extraordinary contributions both here and abroad, and I am sure that my Senate colleagues join me in paying tribute to B'nai B'rith for 160 years of superior performance in serving the needs of generations of Americans and people of nations around the world.